ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION

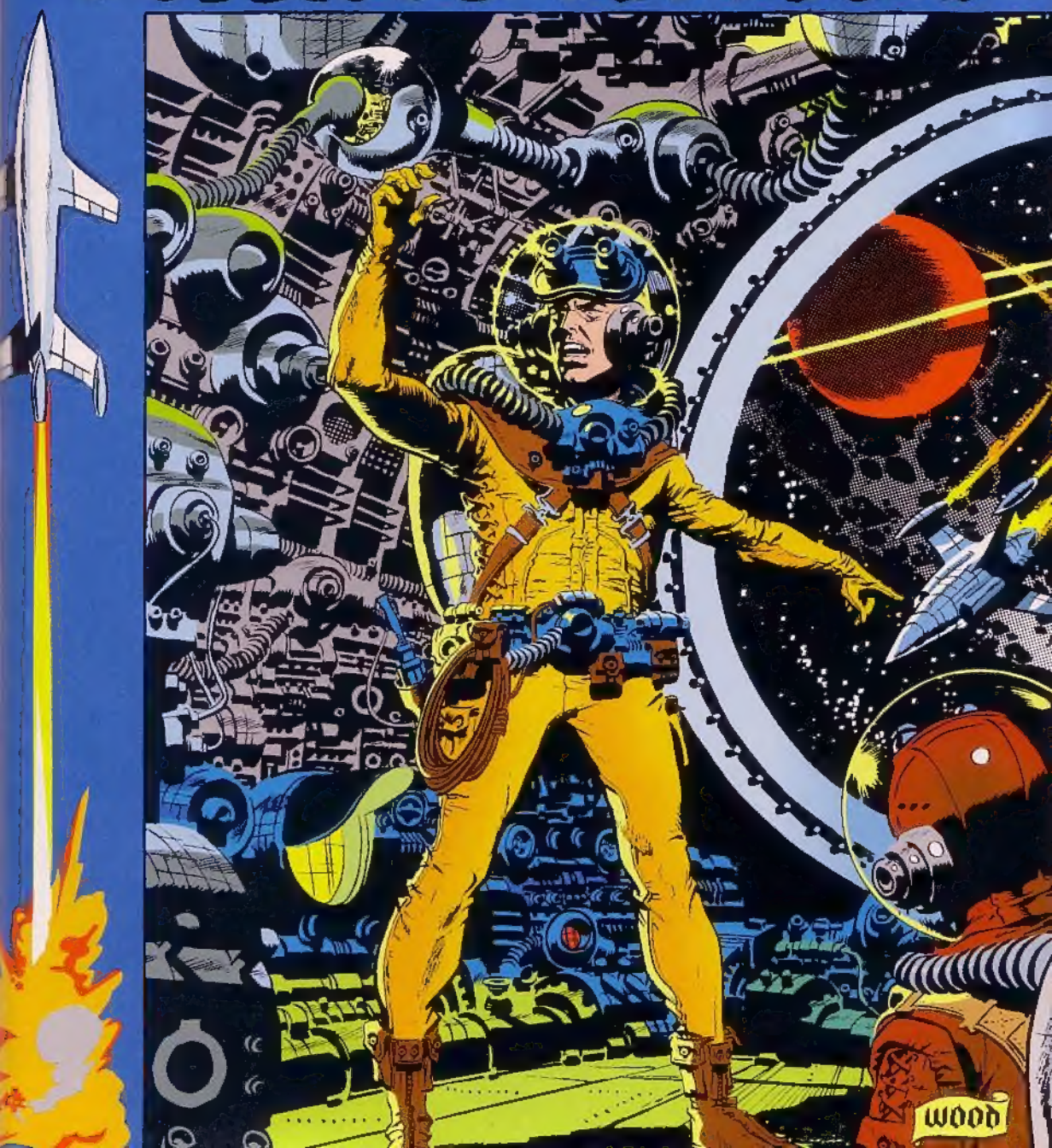
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

O. 11

MAY

2.00

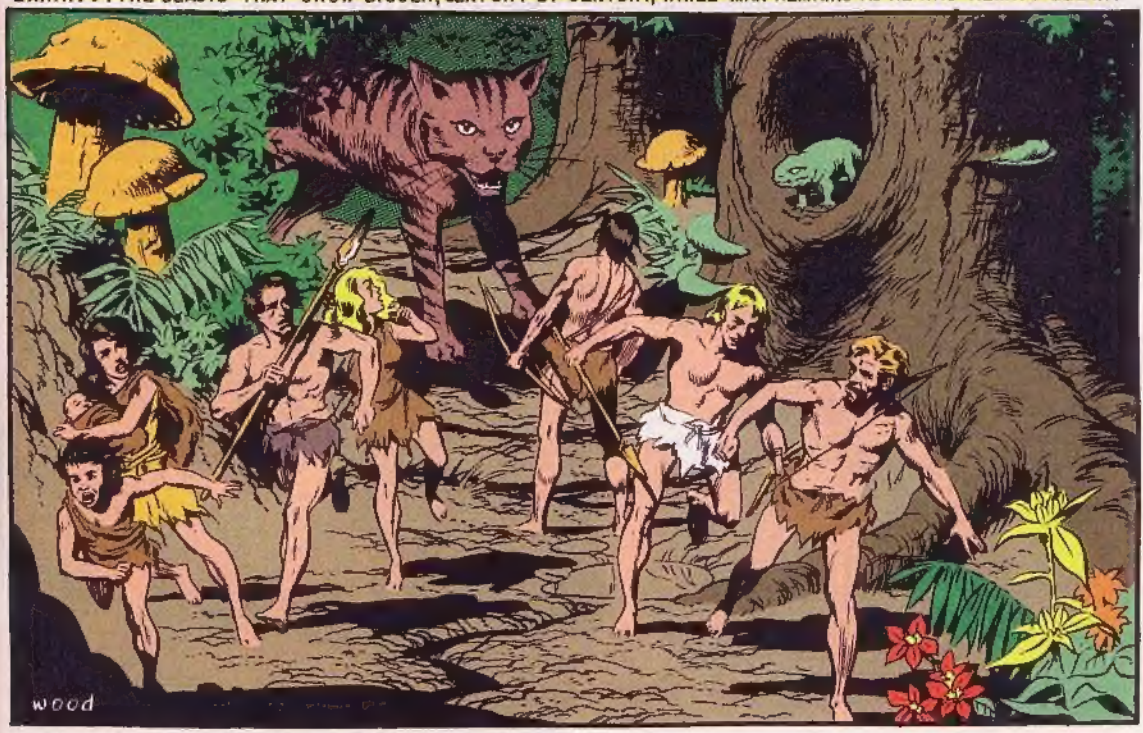
2.75 CANADA



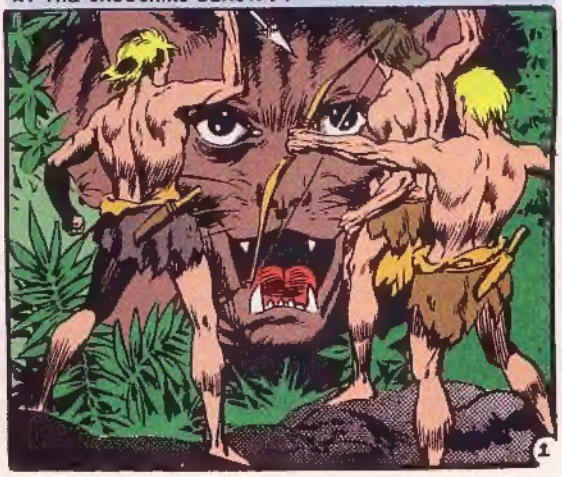
EC
INCREDIBLE
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO.33 FEB.
10¢
SCIENCE FICTION
wood

BIG MOMENT

THERE WERE MANY SCATTERED TRIBES LEFT...STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE AGAINST THE GIANT BEAST. AND OF ALL THE GIANT BEASTS, THE HUNTING CATS WERE THE WORST. WE'D COME FROM THE WEST. WE'D FOLLOWED THE SUN...AND A HOPE. BUT, SOMETIMES, IT IS NOT EASY TO KEEP A HOPE ALIVE. WHEN THE CAT FOUND US, THE TRIBE SCATTERED IN TERROR. FOR NO MAN IN LIVING MEMORY HAS EVER KILLED ONE OF THESE BRUTES WHICH ROAM THE EARTH...THE BEASTS THAT GROW BIGGER, CENTURY BY CENTURY, WHILE MAN REMAINS AS HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN...

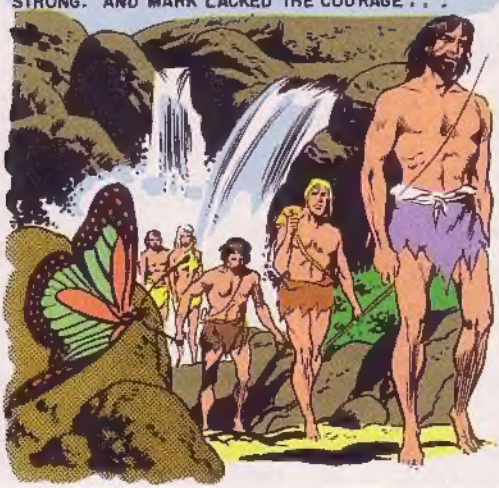


AT FIRST THE MEMBERS OF MY TRIBE RAN. BUT AT MY COMMAND, THEY STOPPED AND TURNED TO FACE THE GIANT CAT, FLINGING THEIR SPEARS, SENDING THEIR ARROWS AT THE CROUCHING BEAST...



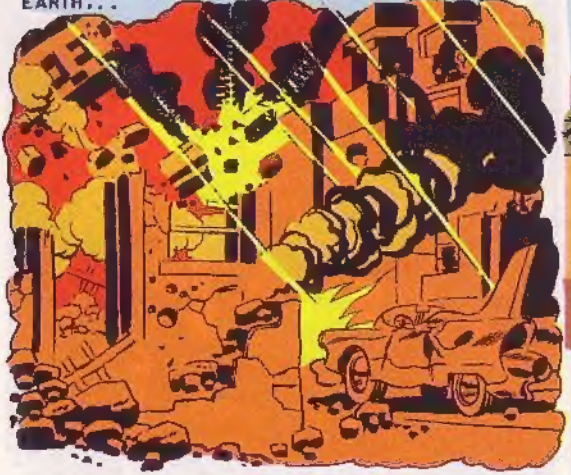
FINALLY, HARRASSED BY OUR WEAPONS, THE HUNTING CAT TURNED AND LOPED OFF. . .

MARK SHOOK HIS HEAD. ALL THROUGH OUR TRIP EAST, HE HAD CRITICIZED AND TIRADED... POINTING TO THE FOLLY OF IT. HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE KILLED ME AND RETURNED WITH THE TRIBE TO THE WEST, I WAS SURE. BUT I WAS THE CHIEF, AND STRONG. AND MARK LACKED THE COURAGE. . .



WE BURIED OUR DEAD AND WENT ON... DUST MOTES, IN A WORLD GROWING WILD... A GIANT WORLD. AND I THOUGHT, AS WE MARCHED, OF HOW IT HAD BEGUN... THE STORIES THE OLD ONES TOLD... OF THAT DAY LONG AGO. . .

IT HAD NOT BEEN A MAN-MADE BOMB WHICH HAD DEVASTATED EARTH. THE DESTRUCTION HAD COME FROM SPACE... FIERY METEORS... SHOWERING DOWN UPON EARTH...

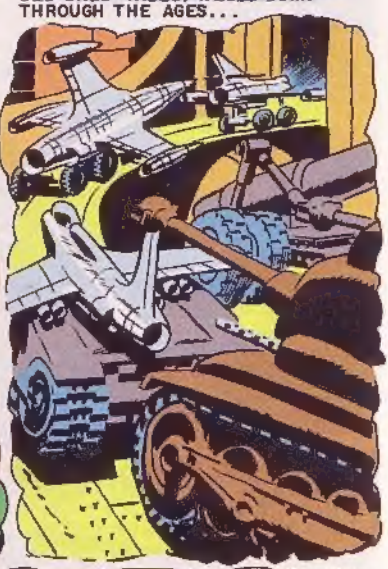


AND AFTER THE METEOR SHOWER, THERE'D BEEN THE RADIATION... THE UNSEEN FORCE WHICH DID STRANGE THINGS TO THE LIFE ON EARTH...

THE IRONY OF IT. MAN HAD FEARED THE RADIATION... FEARED MUTATION... FEARED THAT HE WOULD CHANGE. BUT IT HAD NOT BEEN SO. AND THAT HAD BEEN MAN'S CURSE...

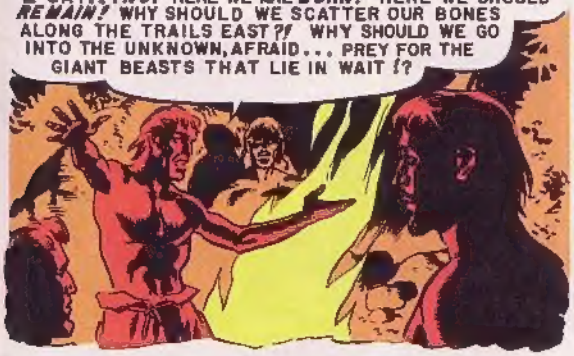
MAN, IT SEEMED, ALONE REMAINED UNTOUCHED BY THE RADIATION... WHILE THE BEASTS, AND THE TREES, AND THE INSECTS GREW AND GREW... WITH EACH SUCCEEDING GENERATION...

MAN HAD BECOME THE HUNTED. AND IN HIS FEAR, HE'D LOST HIS SCIENCE. HE'D RUN TO THE PRIMITIVE. BUT I'D HAD A HOPE. I'D REMEMBERED THE OLD ONES' TALES, PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE AGES...

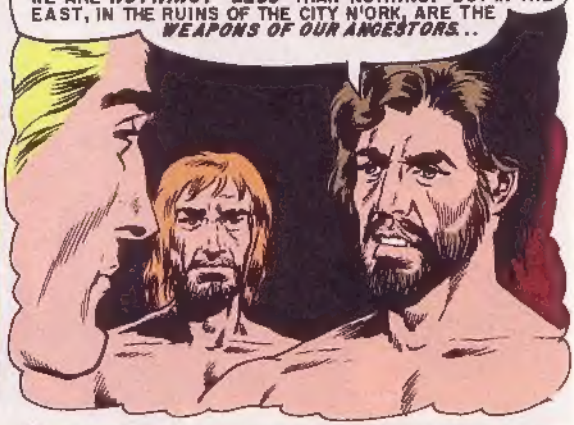


LONG AGO, MAN HAD OUTLAWED WAR. AND IN A PLACE CALLED N'ORK, MAN'S MIGHTY WEAPONS HAD BEEN GATHERED AND STORED. I'D REMEMBERED THE TALES, AND ONE DAY, WHEN I'D BECOME CHIEF, I'D GATHERED MY TRIBE AROUND ME...

I SAY... ***NO!*** HERE WE ARE ***BORN!*** HERE WE SHOULD ***REMAIN!*** WHY SHOULD WE SCATTER OUR BONES ALONG THE TRAILS EAST?! WHY SHOULD WE GO INTO THE UNKNOWN, AFRAID... PREY FOR THE GIANT BEASTS THAT LIE IN WAIT !?



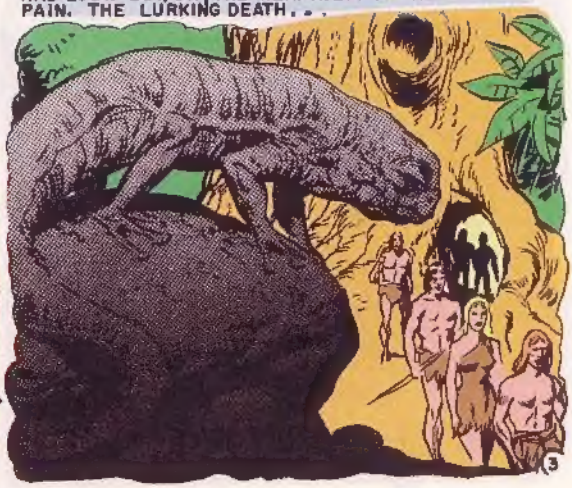
SO THAT ONE DAY, WE MAY ***NO LONGER*** BE AFRAID... HUNTED BY THE GIANT BEASTS. WITHOUT WEAPONS, WE ARE ***NOTHING! LESS*** THAN NOTHING! BUT IN THE EAST, IN THE RUINS OF THE CITY N'ORK, ARE THE ***WEAPONS OF OUR ANCESTORS...***



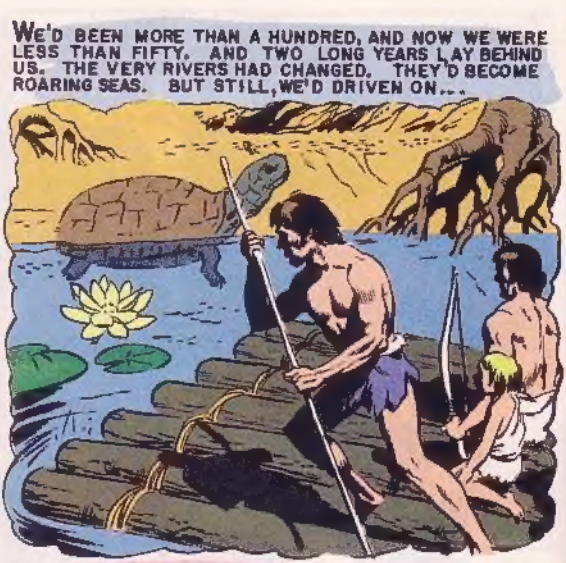
MARK, OUR PRIEST, HAD BEEN AGAINST IT FROM THE START. BUT I'D SPOKEN...

WITH THESE WEAPONS, MAN COULD BE ***GREAT*** AGAIN! SOME WILL DIE ALONG THE WAY, YES... BUT THOSE WHO ***LIVE*** WILL BE ***MASTERS OF THE EARTH ONCE MORE,*** AS MEN WERE ***MEANT*** TO BE!

MY WORDS HAD INFLAMED THE TRIBE, AND SO MARK HAD LOST. BUT, OH, THE WEARINESS OF THE WAY. THE PAIN. THE LURKING DEATH...



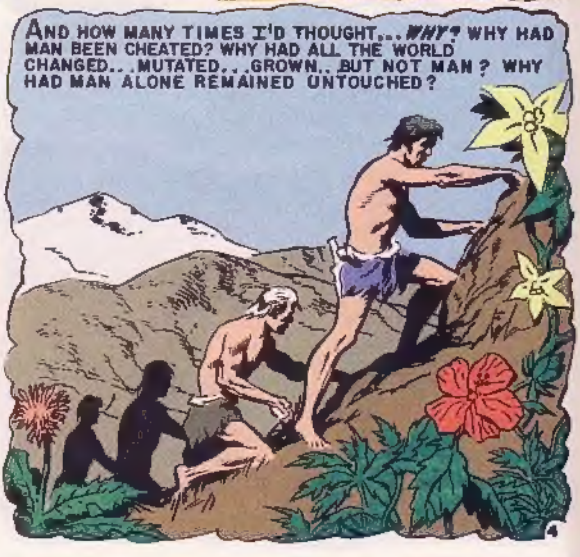
EVEN THE TINY LIZARDS HAD GROWN. MEN HAD BECOME THE FLIES THEY ONCE HUNTED...


WE'D BEEN MORE THAN A HUNDRED, AND NOW WE WERE LESS THAN FIFTY. AND TWO LONG YEARS LAY BEHIND US. THE VERY RIVERS HAD CHANGED. THEY'D BECOME ROARING SEAS. BUT STILL, WE'D DRIVEN ON...

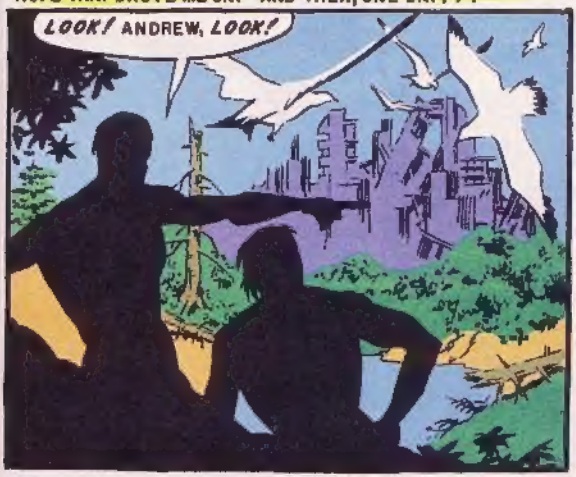
EVEN THE CREATURES OF THE RIVERS AND LAKES HAD GROWN HUGE. THEY'D UPSET OUR CRUDE RAFTS TIME AND AGAIN...

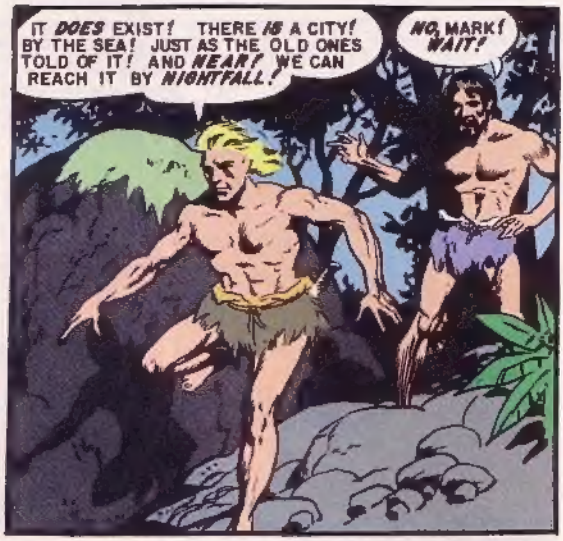
SO FEW OF US REMAINED AT LAST. BUT I DROVE THEM ON. TOWARD THAT BRIGHT MOMENT WHEN WE WOULD BEHOLD THE WEAPONS OF OUR ANCESTORS AND BECOME STRONG AGAIN. ACROSS THE RUSHING RIVERS, THE GIANT FORESTS, THE DRY PLACES...

WE MARKED OUR WAY WITH OUR LOST COMPANIONS. BUT WE WENT ON...


AND HOW MANY TIMES I'D THOUGHT... *WHY?* WHY HAD MAN BEEN CHEATED? WHY HAD ALL THE WORLD CHANGED... MUTATED... GROWN.. BUT NOT MAN? WHY HAD MAN ALONE REMAINED UNTOUCHED?

I THOUGHT MY THOUGHTS, AND SOMETIMES THE BITTERNESS WAS A STONE WITHIN ME. BUT THERE WAS ALWAYS THE HOPE THAT DROVE ME ON. AND THEN, ONE DAY. . .





I HEARD MARK'S WORDS AND YET I COULD NOT GRIEVE FOR MY TRIBE. I KNEW THAT IT WAS BETTER THIS WAY...

WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED?

WOLVES! THEY ATTACKED OUR CAMP!

MARK TOLD ME HOW THE GIANT WOLVES HAD COME... HOW THE TRIBE HAD TRIED TO FIGHT THEM OFF WITH ITS PUNY WEAPONS... AND HOW HE ALONE HAD ESCAPED...

YOU BROUGHT THIS UPON US! I SHOULD HATE YOU! BUT IT IS NOT YOU I HATE! IT IS THE BEASTS! THE GIANT BEASTS! AND THE TRICK OF NATURE THAT KEPT US UNCHANGED WHILE THEY GREW LARGE!

WE ARE THE LAST OF OUR TRIBE, ANDREW. BUT THERE ARE OTHERS. WE CAN JOIN THEM. WE CAN WIN YET...

THE WEAPONS!? DID YOU FIND THE WEAPONS, ANDREW?

I FOUND THEM, MARK! COME! I WILL SHOW YOU!

I TOLD HIM ONLY THAT. AND SO HE WENT ON RAGING! HE WENT ON SPEAKING OF RIDDING THE EARTH OF THE MUTANT MONSTROSITIES. BUT HE SPOKE LESS AS WE NEARED THE CITY...

HE SPOKE NOT AT ALL TOWARD THE END. WHEN I LED HIM TO THE GREAT ARSENAL, HE WAS SILENT...

THE WEAPONS WERE THERE. ROCKETS WHICH MIGHT HAVE ONE DAY TAKEN MEN TO THE STARS. GUNS. GREAT LUMBERING MACHINES OF DESTRUCTION...

THE WEAPONS WERE THERE, THEIR ALLOY METAL STILL BRIGHT. THEY WERE THERE BY THE THOUSANDS AND TENS OF THOUSANDS. BUT MAN WOULD NEVER USE THEM! MAN WOULD HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY...
WE WERE WRONG, MARK! SO WRONG! THE IRONY IS EVEN GREATER THAN WE THOUGHT! NOW WE KNOW THE TRUTH... AT LAST! AND IT IS A BITTER TRUTH!
IT WAS NOT THE BEASTS WHO WERE MUTATED, MARK! THE TREES, THE ANIMALS, THE INSECTS ARE AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN. ONLY ONE KIND OF LIFE HAS CHANGED, DOWN THROUGH THE AGES...
...MAN!
THE END

THIS PAGE WAS AN ORIGINAL FEATURE PAGE IN THIS ISSUE OF INCSF IN 1956.

THE ENTERTAINMENT BOX

FAR AND AWAY is an exceptional collection of stories, written and selected by a master of his trade. Anthony Boucher is equally famous as editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and as author of some of the best imaginative fiction being produced.

The eleven tales in this book have a range as wide as the author's fancy—he starts with an extraordinary detective story in San Francisco, moves on to an incident involving two army chaplains on active duty on Mars, back to a very small demon in a biochemist's lab, a national election result that seems to get changed, an author who sends a lethal review copy to a writer of scathing reviews. No matter where Mr. Boucher goes, he sees something just a little bit different from what we expect to be shown, making his book one that is full of small surprises. His skillful proportioning of fun, of fantasy, and of fine-pointed wit makes this one of the most entertaining collections we have seen for some time. It is published by Ballantine Books, in a 35c paperbound edition.

GLADIATOR-AT-LAW is another successful result of the collaboration of Frederik Pohl and Cyril M. Kornbluth, whose satire, THE SPACE MERCHANTS deals so effectively with the advertising world. In their current effort, the authors tackle the worlds of law, housing, entertainment, and Wall Street. Just how they manage to strike home so often in all these directions at once is a feat best explained by an expert juggler. The fact that they do it so well has enabled them to present once again a biting satire, written with all the excitement and intensity that those familiar with the team have come to expect. This is another Ballantine Book, paperbound, 35c.

In REBIRTH, author John Wyndham imagines a post-atomic world. This is a world left in both physical and intellectual tatters: isolated groups of people live in widely separated oases on a radio-active earth. They have, in some instances, some memory of pre-atomic technology, but they lack materials with which to work. The struggle for survival is complicated by frequent and bizarre mutations which appear in life forms.

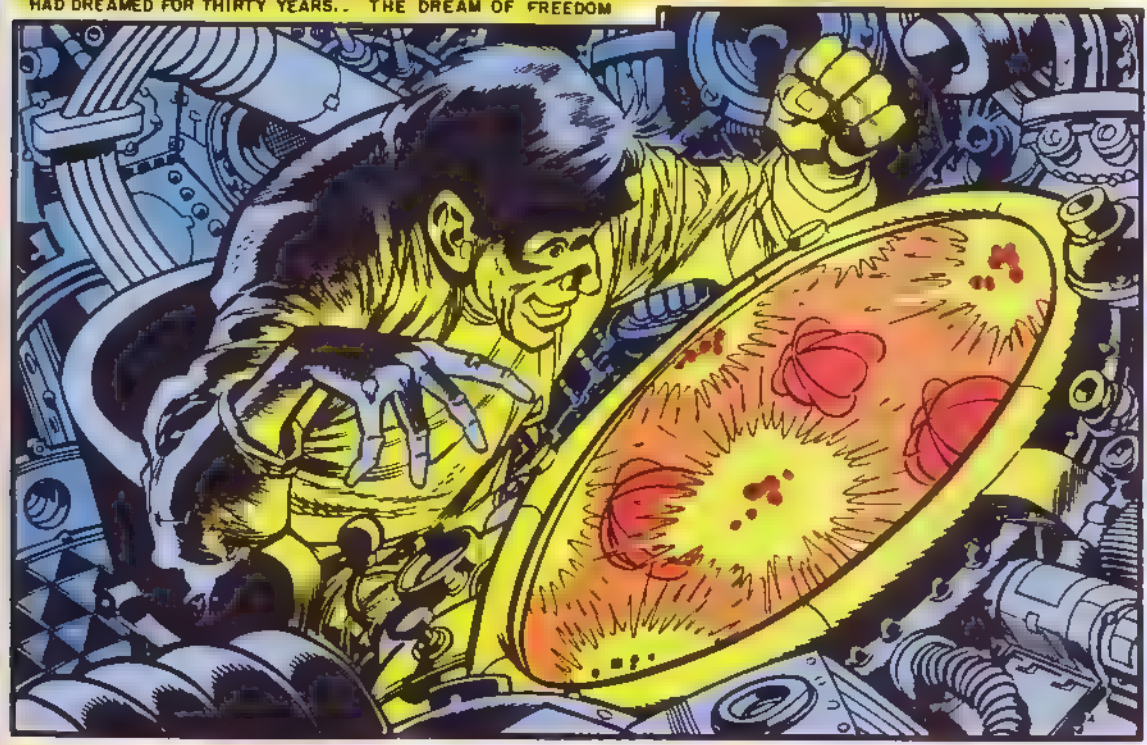
The obvious analogy with the Salem witch-hunts and the general emotional climate of Puritan New England helps make this make-believe world startlingly real and credible. The reader becomes absorbed in the story, and is willing to accept the members of this strangely primitive society who will save it in spite of itself. Mr. Wyndham tells a fascinating story, and he tells it well. Published by Ballantine Books, in a 35c paperbound edition.

THE COMPLETE E. C. CHECKLIST, compiled by Fred Von Bernewitz, is a remarkable little pamphlet. In it, the E. C. fan can find the name of every story E. C. ever turned out, listed by title and issue, along with the name of the artist who drew it. Also included are a Ray Bradbury index, an Eando Binder index, and a listing of the biographies of the artists. The price for the CHECKLIST is 25c . . . which also includes yearly supplements. (E. C. is in no way connected with this enterprise . . . but we highly recommend the CHECKLIST to the serious E. C. collector.) Send your quarters to:

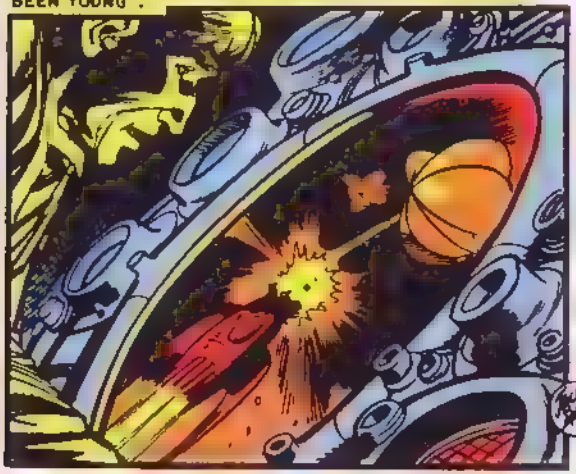
Fred Von Bernewitz

KALEIDOSCOPE

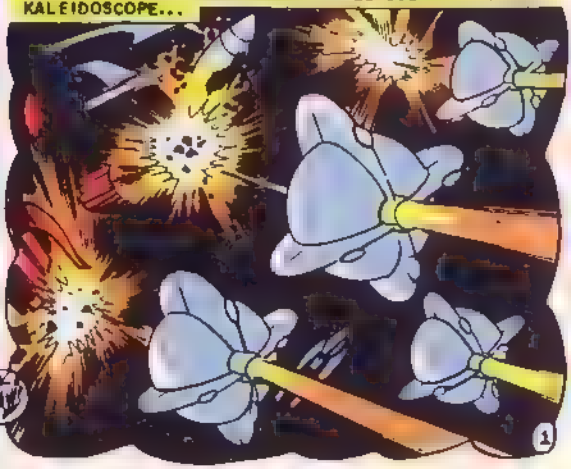
THAT'S HOW IT LOOKED. LIKE A KALEIDOSCOPE... THE CHILD'S TOY IN WHICH BITS AND PIECES OF COLORED GLASS JOIN TOGETHER AND ARE MIRRORED INTO BEAUTIFUL PATTERNS ONLY, ON THE VIEW-SCREEN, THE PATTERNS WERE NOT BEAUTIFUL. THE COLORS WERE THE COLORS OF WAR. THE RED AND THE YELLOW AND THE ORANGE FLARED AS THE VENUSIAN SHIPS WERE HIT. AND DAVIS SAT AT THE CONTROLS AND LAUGHED WITH THE SHEER SAVAGE JOY OF IT. HIS LIPS DREW BACK FROM YELLOWED TEETH, AND THE LIGHT IN HIS EYES WAS THE UNHOLY LIGHT OF THE DREAM HE HAD DREAMED FOR THIRTY YEARS.. THE DREAM OF FREEDOM



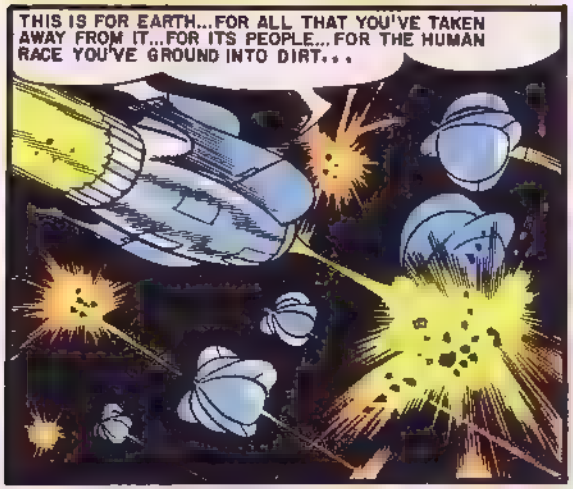
THE KALEIDOSCOPE WHIRLED, SPUN. DAVIS WAS OLD, AND YET IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT THE PATTERN ON HIS VIEW-SCREEN CHANGED... TO A TIME LONG AGO.. WHEN HE'D BEEN YOUNG .



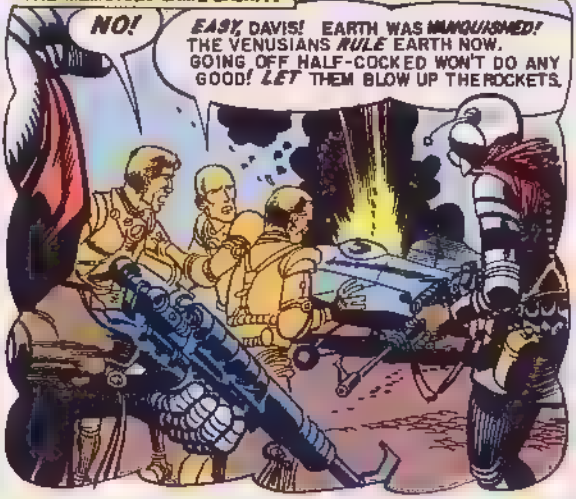
IT SEEMED TO DAVIS THAT HE SAW OTHER SHIPS...EARTH SHIPS. ONCE THERE HAD BEEN MANY EARTH SHIPS, LONG AGO. BUT, THE VENUSIAN SHIPS HAD COME. AND IT HAD BEEN EARTH SHIPS WHICH HAD FLARED COLOR IN A COSMIC KALEIDOSCOPE...

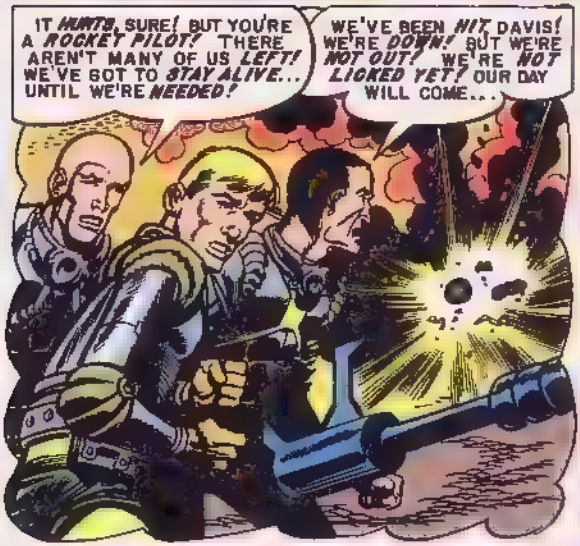


THE EARTH SHIPS HAD DIED, THIRTY YEARS AGO. BUT DAVIS STILL REMEMBERED. AND NOW HIS DREAM OF FREEDOM WAS COMING TRUE ON THE SCREEN. IN RED... ORANGE...YELLOW... IN EXPLODING COLORS...

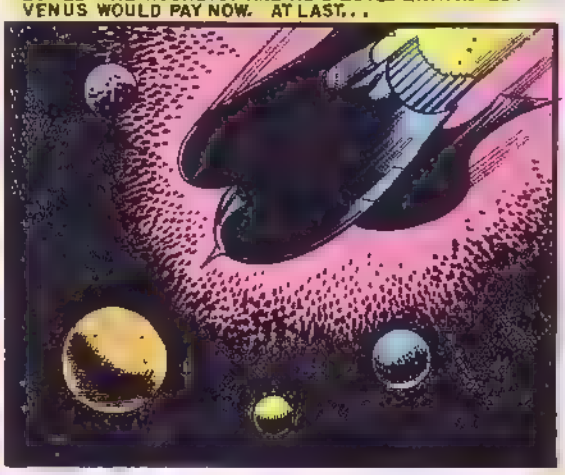


AND DAVIS LAUGHED AS THE VENUSIAN SHIPS FLARED. MAN WAS NOT FINISHED...NOT YET! THE PICTURE FADED. THE BITS AND PIECES WAVERED AND ALTERED IN HIS BRAIN. THE MEMORIES CAME BACK...

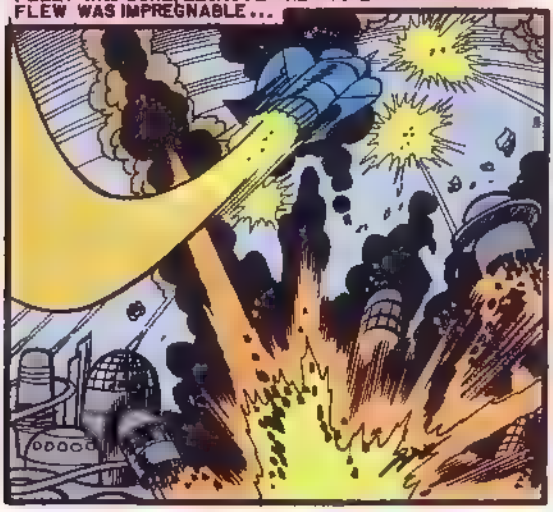




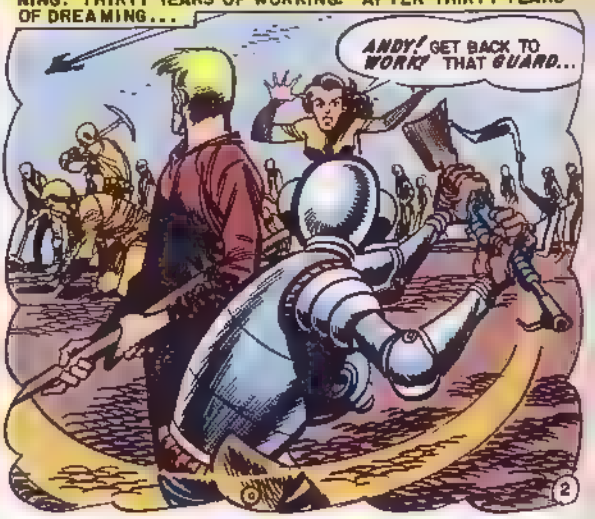
THAT PICTURE... THE DESTRUCTION OF EARTH'S LAST ROCKETS...WAS THE WORST TO RECALL. DAVIS HAD LOVED THE ROCKETS. AND HE'D LOVED EARTH. BUT VENUS WOULD PAY NOW. AT LAST...



THERE WAS NO ONE TO STOP HIM, NOW. THE VENUSIAN FLEET WAS GONE, BECAUSE THE ROCKET THAT DAVIS FLEW WAS IMPREGNABLE...



AH, THE SWEETNESS OF IT. AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF PLANNING. THIRTY YEARS OF WORKING. AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF DREAMING...



AT FIRST, IT HAD SEEMED SO HOPELESS. MAN HAD BEEN ENSLAVED BY THE VENUSIANS, FORCED TO WORK, TO GROVEL UNDER THE ROBOT OVERSEERS. MANY HAD BROKEN. BUT DAVIS HAD NOT BROKEN...
ANDY! PLEASE! DON'T! GO BACK TO WORK. THEY'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE AS LONG AS YOU GO ON WORKING AND PRODUCING FOR THEIR VENUSIAN MASTERS.
ALL RIGHT, JEAN. ALL RIGHT. BUT... SOME DAY THINGS WILL BE DIFFERENT.
SOMEDAY. THOSE HAD BEEN JUST A SLAVE'S WORDS, THEN. BUT EVEN SLAVES MUST REST. IT HAD BEEN ON A REST DAY THAT DAVIS HAD FOUND THE ROCKET..
HE'D WANDERED ALONE, BEYOND THE ENDLESS PLANTATIONS. ON REST DAYS, THE ROBOTS DIDN'T CARE. WHERE COULD A MAN HIDE? AND THERE HAD BEEN A GLEAM OF SUNLIGHT ON METAL.
THE ROCKET HAD STOOD AMID THE TREES. FORGOTTEN. OVERLOOKED. AND DAVIS HAD TOUCHED HER GLEAMING ALLOY SKIN TENDERLY, FONDLED HER CONTROLS...
AND HE'D WEPT. BUT TEARS WOULD NOT DESTROY EARTH'S YOKE. SO HE'D GONE TO THE OTHERS...
ONE SHIP... AGAINST ALL OF THE VENUSIANS! DAVIS, YOU'RE MAD! IT'S A DREAM!
A DREAM THAT WE CAN MAKE COME TRUE! LARSON, YOU WERE A SCIENTIST ONCE. BEFORE EARTH WAS CONQUERED, YOU WERE EXPERIMENTING WITH A SHIELD!
A FORCE SHIELD, YES! NO WEAPON COULD HAVE PENETRATED IT! BUT TO EQUIP A SHIP WITH SUCH A SHIELD WOULD REQUIRE TOOLS... MATERIALS...
THEN WE'LL GET THEM...SOMEHOW!
OUR ROCKET IS WAITING! ARMED! FUELED! WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF SOME OF US DIE IN THE ATTEMPT!? WE'RE LIVING DEAD AS IS! AT LEAST WE CAN TRY!
IT'S A DREAM... BUT AT LEAST WE CAN TRY!
3

DAVIS TOUCHED HIS CONTROLS. THAT PORTION OF THE KALEIDOSCOPE WAS FAR AWAY... LONG AGO. BUT THE FRUIT OF IT WAS HERE! NOW!

VENUSIAN CITIES BURNED TO CINDERS AS DAVIS DOVE THE ROCKET. AND THE LEAPING FLAMES WERE THE FULFILLMENT BORN IN OTHER, LONG-DEAD FLAMES IN THE PAST..

IT'S *NO USE*, DAVIS! WE *CAN'T DO IT!* WE *CAN'T* CREATE HIGH DENSITY ALLOYS IN AN *OPEN FIRE!* WE *CAN'T* MACHINE WITH *HAND TOOLS*...

IF WE CAN OBTAIN THE ALLOYS, WE CAN FIND A WAY TO *WORK* WITH THEM...

THE WORK HAD BEEN SLOW... AGONIZING. MEN HAD [illegible] TO GET BITS OF METAL, TOOLS, SCRAPS OF WIRE. BUT THE WORK HAD GONE ON...

NO... USE! IT... DOESN'T FIT! AND IT *MUST FIT* THE OTHER SECTIONS OF THE FIELD-PROJECTOR... TO A TOLERANCE OF *TWO FIVE-THOUSANDTHS*... GASP...

LARSON...

LARSON HAD FALLEN... HIS HEART BURSTING UNDER THE STRAIN...

HE'S *DEAD!* THE WEIGHT WAS *TOO MUCH* FOR HIM! WHAT DO WE DO *NOW*, DAVIS?

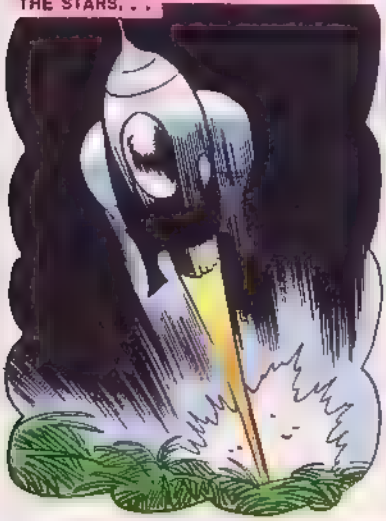
DO?! WHAT *CAN* WE DO? WE *GO ON!* WE HAVE HIS *PLANS!* WHAT *ELSE* DO WE HAVE TO LIVE FOR?

AND SO IT HAD GONE ON. THE YEARS HAD BECOME ONE LONG BLUR. ONE BY ONE, THE OTHERS HAD PASSED ON...

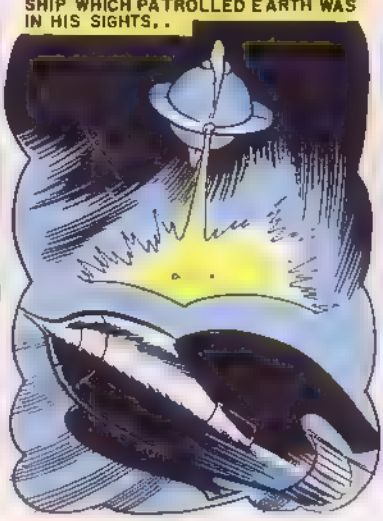
HE WAS THE *LAST!* I'M THE ONLY ONE *LEFT* TO WORK ON THE ROCKET NOW! BUT I'LL *STILL MAKE IT!* I *SWEAR*...

JANE HAD STOPPED BELIEVING IN DAVIS'S DREAM BY THEN. THEY ALL HAD. BUT THEY'D BEEN WRONG! ALL OF THEM!

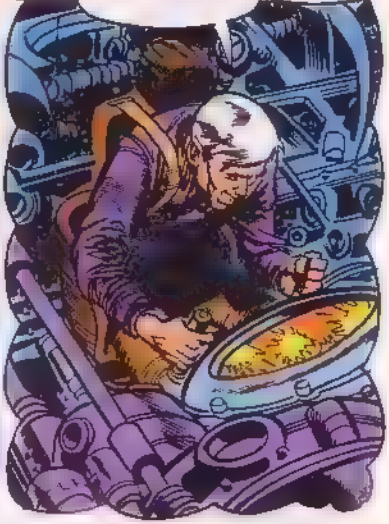
THE LAST PIECE IN THE PATTERN HAD BEEN HIS ALONE. WHEN HE WAS READY, DAVIS HAD GONE TO THE SHIP.. AND LIFTED HIS LAST HOPE TOWARD THE STARS...



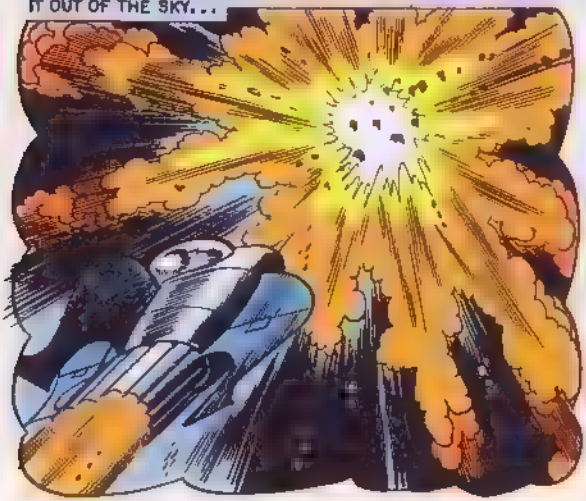
HE'D FELT THE THRUST AS FOURTEEN G'S HAD WRENCHED HIS FRAIL BODY AND THEN THERE WAS SPACE. BLESSED SPACE. AND THE VENUSIAN SHIP WHICH PATROLLED EARTH WAS IN HIS SIGHTS..



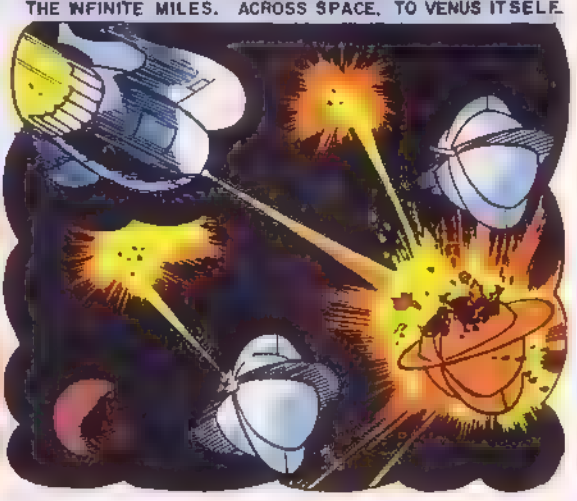
THE *SHIELD* IS *WORKING!* LARSON... WHEREVER YOU ARE, YOU *MUST KNOW!* IT'S *WORKING!* EARTH STILL HAS A CHANCE!



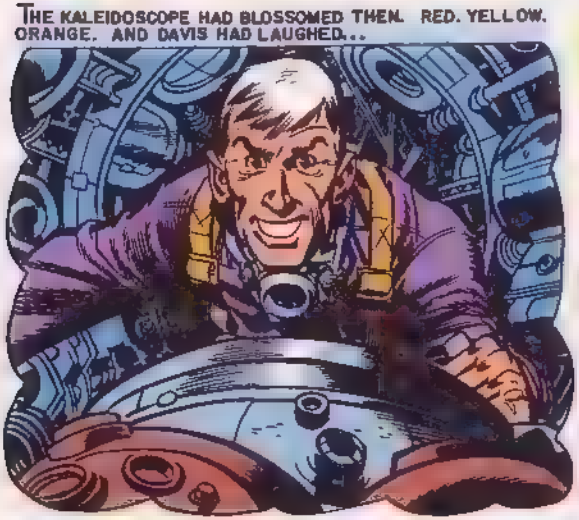
THE PATROL SHIP'S SHOTS HAD BEEN INEFFECTIVE AGAINST THE ROCKET'S PROTECTIVE SHIELD AND DAVIS HAD BLASTED IT OUT OF THE SKY...



A CHANCE? EARTH HAD HAD MORE THAN A CHANCE. THE ROCKET HAD BEEN AN AVENGING ANGEL. IT HAD GULPED THE INFINITE MILES. ACROSS SPACE. TO VENUS ITSELF.



THE KALEIDOSCOPE HAD BLOSSOMED THEN. RED. YELLOW. ORANGE. AND DAVIS HAD LAUGHED...



NOW, IT WAS DONE. WITHOUT THEIR MASTERS, THE ROBOTS WOULD FALL. VENUS WAS A SMOKING RUIN. BACK TO EARTH! BACK TO THE GREEN HILLS AND THE CLEAN BLUE SEAS...

THESE WERE COLORS A MAN COULD LOVE. EARTH COLORS. GOOD COLORS. THE VERY HEART AND SOUL OF DAVIS'S PATTERN OF DREAMS...

DAVIS WAS TIRED. BUT HIS HANDS WERE STEADY ON THE CONTROLS. THE ROCKET SETTLED GENTLY. AND THE TASTE OF HIS VICTORY WAS LIKE WINE...

ANDY? ANDY... ARE YOU IN THERE?

JANE'S VOICE. DAVIS STIRRED, UNHOOKED THE SEAT HARNESS...

ANDY DAVIS! YOU COME DOWN FROM THERE!

DAVIS WISHED JANE HADN'T COME. SHE'D SPOILED THE MOMENT. THE COLORS WERE SHIFTING AGAIN...BECOMING DULL...GREY...

ANDY, ANDY, WON'T YOU *EVER* LEARN? DO YOU WANT THE ROBOTS TO *PUNISH* YOU AGAIN?

NO...NO, 'COURSE NOT!

BUT EVEN IF THEY *DID*... IT WOULD BE *WORTH IT!* IT WAS JUST LIKE A...A *KALEIDOSCOPE*, JANE. YOU KNOW, YOU LOOK INTO IT... AND YOU CAN SEE ANYTHING YOU *WANT* TO SEE, IN THE COLORS.

ANDY, THIS MAKES *FOUR TIMES* THIS WEEK YOU'VE SNEAKED AWAY. IF THE ROBOTS SEE YOU HERE, YOU *KNOW* WHAT WILL HAPPEN!

YOU AND THAT *IMAGINATION* OF YOURS! SOMETIMES I THINK YOU CAN'T TELL THE *DIFFERENCE* BETWEEN *DREAMING* AND *REALITY*. NOW, COME ALONG...

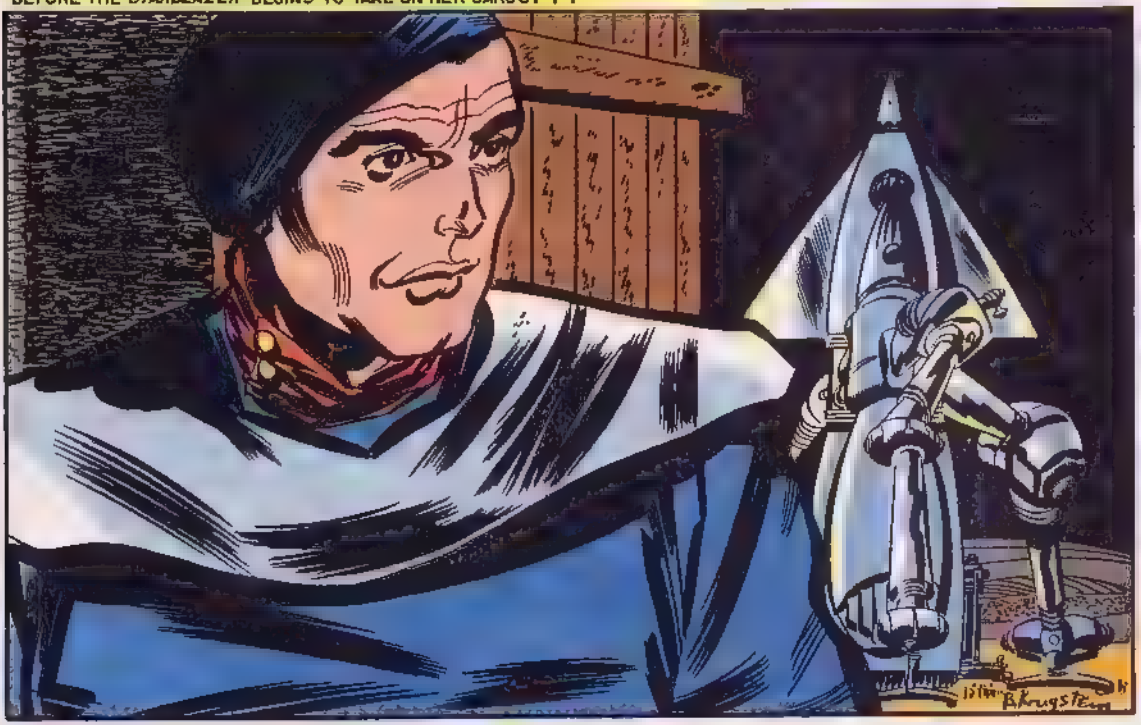
DAVIS SHIVERED. THE AIR HAD TURNED CHILLY. JANE WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE. BUT REALITY WAS SO HARSH, AND THE DREAM WAS SO WONDERFUL. IT WAS BETTER...TO DREAM...

...I ONLY HOPE THE ROBOTS HAVEN'T MISSED US. PLAYING WITH THAT *OLD HULK*... AT *YOUR AGE*... PRETENDING IT CAN *FLY!*

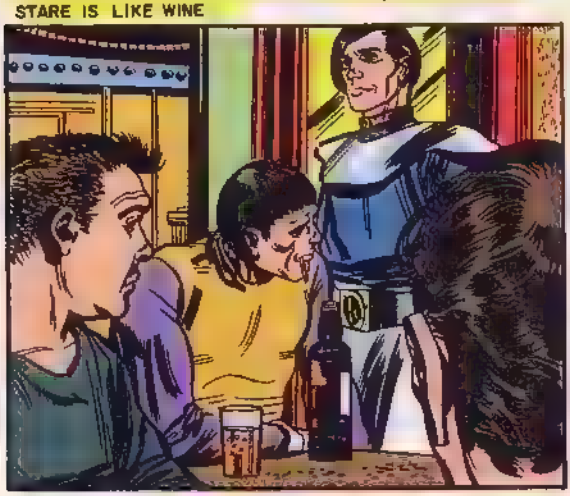
THE END

ONE WAY HERO

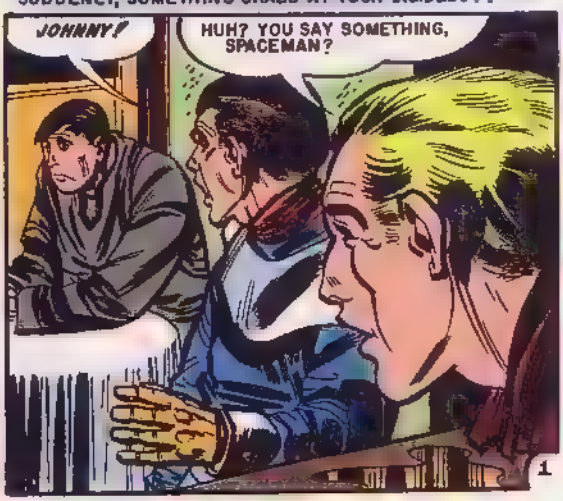
THE ROCKETS SIT BEHIND YOU, THEIR NOSES POINTED TO THE DISTANT STARS, AND YOU CAN STILL THRILL TO THE POWER AND BEAUTY OF THEM. BUT TONIGHT, YOU DON'T LOOK BACK. YOU STRIDE MARS LIKE A CONQUEROR, TRIM AND ERECT IN YOUR GLITTERING SPACEMAN'S UNIFORM, AND SIX HOURS OF PLEASURE LIE AHEAD OF YOU. IT WILL BE SIX HOURS BEFORE THE *STARBLAZER* BEGINS TO TAKE ON HER CARGO. . .



YOU KNOW THE WAY TO THE STILL-NEW, BRAWLING MARTIAN CITY. . . TO THE GLARING LIGHTS AND THE GAY PLACES. AND EVERY ADMIRING GLANCE, EVERY ENVIOUS STARE IS LIKE WINE



YOUR UNIFORM IS THE MARK OF A MAN. EVEN THE BULL-LIKE BARTENDER NODS RESPECTFULLY TO YOU. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, SOMETHING GRABS AT YOUR INSIDES. . .



N-NO! I...I JUST THOUGHT I *RECOGNIZED* SOMEONE. THE MAN AT THAT TABLE, THE *YOUNG ONE*...

HIM?! JOHNNY SAWYER?! YOU WOULDN'T KNOW *HIM!* NOT UNLESS YOU SHIPPED ON THE *SPACE QUEEN*. SHE DUMPED HIM HERE A WHILE BACK! ANOTHER *ONE-WAY HERO!*

JOHNNY! JOHNNY! YOUR HEART SOBS HIS NAME. FOR THIS IS YOUR BROTHER. HIS BLOOD IS YOUR BLOOD. THE BOY YOU KNEW HAS BECOME THIS. AN OUTCAST. A CREATURE OF CONTEMPT

MIND IF I SIT HERE, JOHNNY?

WHY *SHOULD* I? BUT, AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF BEING *CONTAMINATED*, SPACEMAN? DIDN'T THE BARTENDER *TELL* YOU ... ABOUT ME?

HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW YOU. HE DOESN'T EVEN ASK HOW YOU KNEW HIS NAME. HE'S FAR GONE. LOW. BUT YOU PRETEND NOT TO NOTICE. IT'S BETTER THIS WAY...

HE *TOLD* ME, JOHNNY! BUT WE CAN'T *ALL* BE LUCKY! ALL A MAN CAN DO IS *TRY!* IF SPACE LICKS HIM, THAT'S THE LUCK OF THE GAME!

I...I *DID* TRY! I...I WONDER WHAT *MART* WOULD SAY IF HE SAW ME NOW. MAYBE YOU *KNOW* MART, SPACEMAN? *MART SAWYER?* HE'S MY *BROTHER*...

NO! I I *DON'T* KNOW HIM BUT I'M A *GOOD LISTENER*...IF YOU'D LIKE TO *TELL* ME ABOUT HIM

TELL YOU? YEAH! YEAH, I'D LIKE TO TELL *SOMEONE*. IT HELPS TO TALK. NOT MANY LISTEN TO *MY* KIND.

YOU KNOW WHAT HE MEANS. HIS KIND ARE FAILURES. MISFITS THE MEN BROKEN BY SPACE. YOUR EVENING'S PLEASURE IS GONE, NOW. BUT WHAT DOES THAT MATTER?

HE...HE'S A *MAN*, MART IS! THAT'S FUNNY, ISN'T IT? HE WENT INTO SPACE SIX YEARS AGO TO ALPHA CENTAURI. HE'LL BE ON HIS WAY HOME NOW. BUT *I'LL* STAY *HERE*... *FOREVER*...BECAUSE OF *HIM!*

AT FIRST, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. BUT THE FALTERING VOICE GOES ON. IT SPEAKS OF A DAY SIX YEARS AGO, AND YOU REMEMBER...

TAKE CARE OF *MOM*, JOHNNY! AND *DON'T FORGET ME!*

I WON'T FORGET YOU, MART! HOW COULD I? YOU'RE A *SPACEMAN!*

YOU'D SAID YOUR GOOD-BYES, AND YOU'D BLASTED OFF ON YOUR FIRST FLIGHT INTO SPACE. YOU'D KNOWN THE SWEET FULFILLMENT OF ALL YOUR DREAMS. AND JOHNNY'S YOUNG FACE HAD BEEN FULL OF PRIDE... AND ENVY...

SOMEDAY... *I'LL* BE A SPACEMAN, *TOO*... MOTHER! LIKE *MART*.

BUT ALL THAT HAD BEEN SO LONG AGO. LONG YEARS AND MILLIONS OF MILES BEHIND YOU. HERE, NOW, THERE IS NO PRIDE...NO ENVY...

THAT DAY, I SWORE I'D BE LIKE MART! *YOU* KNOW HOW IT IS, SPACEMAN. IT GETS TO BE LIKE A *FEVER*...THE ACHE...THE YEARNING FOR SPACE. AND I *MADE IT*...

"I MADE IT, BECAUSE THE YEARNING WAS IN MY BLOOD. I PASSED THE EXAMS AND I WENT TO THE ACADEMY. AND IT WAS ALL AS NATURAL AS BREATHING..."

WHAT'S HE GETTING NOW?

TEN G'S AND ASKING FOR MORE! THAT SAWYER'S A *NATURAL!*

"I REMEMBER THE CENTRIFUGE. I TOOK THIRTEEN G'S, AT THE END...

"I TOOK IT ALL, AND I LAUGHED AT IT. I TOOK THE ALTITUDE CHAMBER... AND I GRINNED..."

OXYGEN EQUIVALENT IS NOW WHAT YOU WOULD EXPERIENCE AT TWENTY-SEVEN THOUSAND FEET, SAWYER. HOW DO YOU *FEEL*?

I FEEL.. *FINE*, SIR. *JUST FINE*... THIS IS...A *BREEZE*...

YEAH, I TOOK IT ALL. BUT, *YOU* KNOW THE TRAINING OF A SPACEMAN! I GRADUATED WITH *HONORS!* THAT'S A *REAL LAUGH*, *ISN'T IT?*

I'M NOT LAUGHING, JOHNNY. GO ON! WHAT HAPPENED? I THINK I KNOW, BUT YOU'LL FEEL BETTER IF YOU TELL ME...

WERE YOU *AFRAID?*

NO. NOT AT *FIRST!* AT FIRST I WAS ONLY *GLAD*.. GLAD THAT MART WOULD BE *PROUD* OF ME.. GLAD THAT I WAS *GOING INTO SPACE AT LAST*...

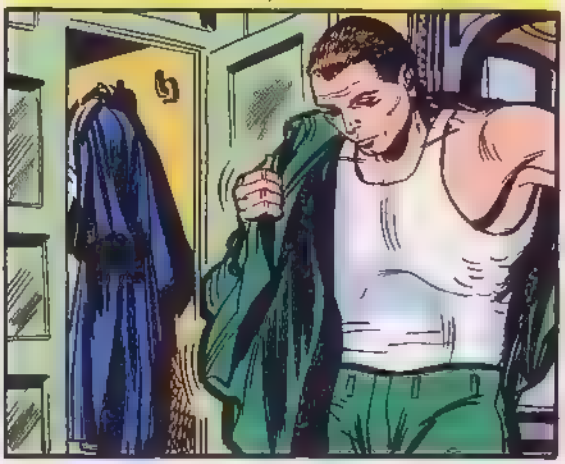
"MOM SAW ME OFF...LIKE SHE'D SEEN MART OFF, AND WHEN OUR TUBES ROARED... WHEN I FELT THE THRUST, I FELT LIKE SHOUTING WITH THE JOY OF IT..."
"THAT'S WHEN IT HAPPENED. SUDDENLY, IT WAS QUIET. WE'D GAINED THRUST. WE'D SHOT SKYWARD... FASTER AND FASTER, AND WE'D LEFT THE SOUND OF OUR TUBES BEHIND US. IT WAS THAT AWFUL QUIET..."
"FOUR YEARS...FOUR YEARS OF TRAINING...OF DREAMING...AND IT ENDED LIKE THAT. I FROZE. IT WAS THE SILENCE...KNOWING WE WERE RUSHING INTO NOTHINGNESS... IN SCREAMING SILENCE..."
QUIET... IT'S SO... QUIET...
SAWYER! SNAP OUT OF IT! LET'S GO! STRAPS OFF!
SAWYER...OF ALL OF US! I NEVER FIGURED HE'D BREAK UP! GET HIM LOOSE. AND HOLD HIM! WE'RE IN FREE-FALL...
GET HIM! I'VE SEEN SPACE FRIGHT BEFORE! HE'LL GO TO PIECES!
"I'D KNOWN FREE-FALL BEFORE. SIMULATED FREE FALL. BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT. THERE WAS NO UP! NO DOWN! AND OUT THERE...IT WAS TOO BIG... IT WAS JUST TOO BIG..."
NO! LET ME GO!
"I SAW THE UNIVERSE SPINNING IN THAT AWFUL SILENCE, AND I LOST CONTROL. I KICKED LOOSE. I WALLOWED IN NOTHINGNESS. WEIGHTLESS. CRAZILY..."
GRAB HIM! HE'LL WRECK US!
NO! NO! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
TURN BACK! OH, LORD...TURN BACK! WE DON'T BELONG OUT HERE! SOB...SOB
TURN BACK!...

"THEN, SOMEONE PUT ME OUT . . "
THEY LOCKED ME UP, SPACEMAN, AND I DIED A THOUSAND DEATHS. THE FEAR WAS LIKE SOMETHING ALIVE INSIDE ME . . .
" I CRIED LIKE A BABY . . . ALL THE WAY TO MARS . . . "
" . . . AND THE SHIP WENT ON WITHOUT ME, AFTER IT REACHED HERE. THEY LEFT ME FOR THE PSYCHO-TECHS . . . "
WELL, SAWYER? IT'S UP TO YOU! THERE'S A ROCKET LEAVING FOR EARTH IN TWO DAYS. YOU CAN BE ON IT. YOU CAN GO HOME . . . IF YOU WANT TO!
GO . . . HOME? GO . . . OUT THERE AGAIN? INTO THAT EMPTINESS?! THAT SILENCE?!
NO! NO! I COULDN'T! SOB . . . I COULDN'T . .
SO I STAYED HERE. I HAD TO. I WAS AFRAID TO GO BACK. I DREAM ABOUT EARTH, SOMETIMES . . . ABOUT MOM . . . AND MART. BUT I KNOW. I KNOW I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO GO BACK. NEVER . . .
NO, JOHNNY WILL NEVER GO BACK. YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS. YOU SIT SILENT WHEN HE'S DONE . . .
SO THAT'S THE STORY, SPACEMAN. AREN'T YOU GOING TO LAUGH?
LAUGH? I THINK I'D RATHER TRY TO HELP YOU, JOHNNY. FOR YOUR BROTHER'S SAKE, IF NOT FOR YOUR OWN! ONE SPACEMAN DOING A FAVOR FOR ANOTHER . . .
3

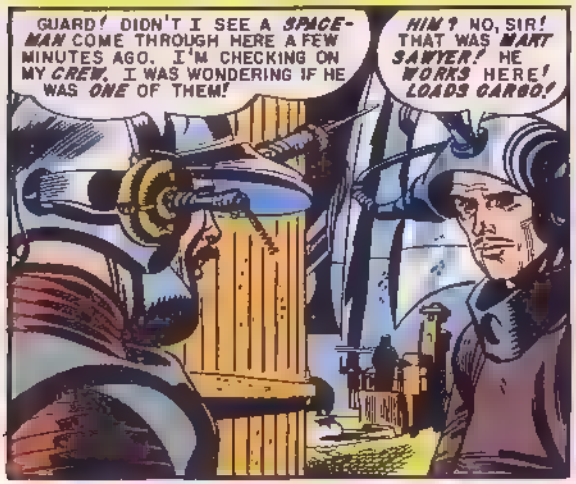
YOU TALK FROM YOUR HEART. FOR A LONG TIME. BECAUSE THIS IS YOUR BROTHER WHO IDOLIZED YOU...WHOM YOU LOVE. AND YOU WIN AT LEAST A SMALL VICTORY. . .

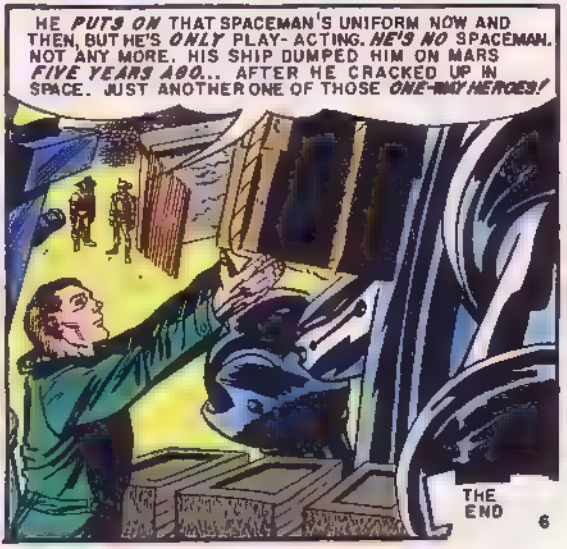
YOU WANT TO STAY, BUT THERE'S A ROCKET WAITING. SO YOU LEAVE, AND ON THE WAY BACK TO THE ROCKET PORT, YOU PRAY. YOU PRAY THAT JOHNNY WILL FIND HIS PEACE—

THE GATEKEEPER KNOWS YOU, SO IF HE NOTICES ANYTHING STRANGE ABOUT YOU, HE PRETENDS NOT TO. BUT YOU DON'T HEAR HIS WORDS, LATER. YOU'RE TOO BUSY. . .



YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THE SCENE LATER, AT THE GATE AND YOU WOULDN'T CARE IF YOU DID. YOUR THOUGHTS ARE ALL WITH JOHNNY. .





SMALL WORLD

Mason watched Sanders covertly. Any moment now, it would happen. At any moment Sanders would lose what little control was left to him and then either he or Mason would lie lifeless on the empty sands of Mars, beside the rocket ship which had brought them here.

For the thousandth time Mason cursed the dead, empty barrenness which was Mars—and the luck which had placed Sanders beside him on the first manned flight to Mars. Of all the men on Earth it had had to be Sanders! Sanders, who had begun to crack up, only halfway out, from the intolerable vastness and nothingness of space. Sanders, who when they were still in the ship, after they had landed, had begun to whine, "There will be *something* here, won't there, Mason? Life! Some kind of life! Any kind! This loneliness—it's more than a man can bear! I—I don't think I could stand it if there was just—nothing!"

At first, there had been hope to keep Sanders' reason from shattering. They'd unloaded the tracked sand-car from the ship and set off across the flat red plains *knowing* that sooner or later they'd find someone or something. They'd clattered off into Mars' silence with whoops and shouts. They'd made it to Mars! The first! But Mars had clamped a great fist of desolation around their hearts. Her twin moons had been staring eyes, mocking their anticipations.

Three weeks and—nothing. Sand. Desolation. Curse Mars! Curse it for being empty! Curse it for not having somewhere, somehow, sometime managed to create *life*.

In the end they'd crawled back to the ship. Not speaking. In the end Sanders had pleaded with Mason to blast off. Now! Before the emptiness drove him mad! But that would have been suicide. There was their trajectory to map, the proper moment to wait for . . . In the end Sanders had screamed and rushed to the controls, and Mason had had to slam a fist to Sanders' jaw.

Sanders had subsided. But this morning, one of the ship's two automatics had been missing.

Mason waited, the second automatic in the pocket of his coveralls, his hand on it. With luck, he could disarm Sanders . . .

Sanders charged, the stolen gun in his hand. But he was beyond all reason. He had reversed the weapon, held it like a club. This would be easy. Mason waited, sidestepped, swung a fist—and Sanders catapulted along, slammed head first into the metal side of the ship.

It was an accident. Mason wept when he realized the truth. But it didn't help much. Sanders was dead.

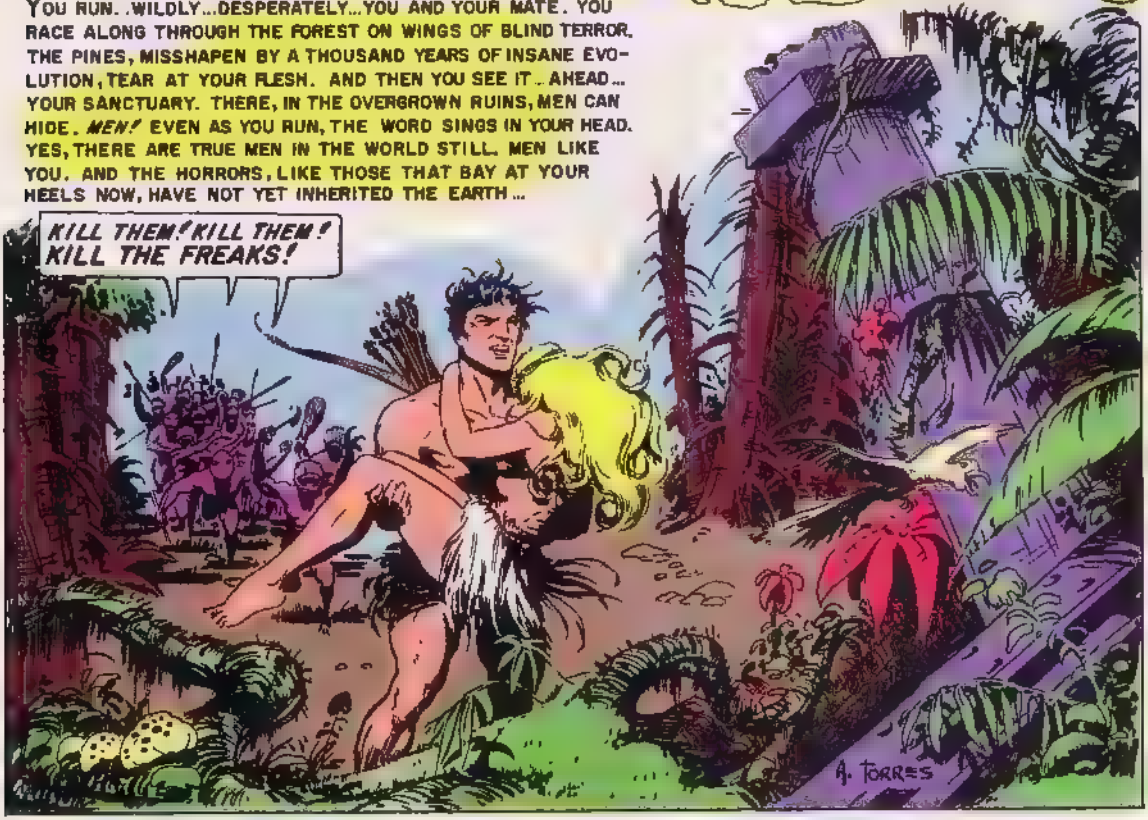
Mason buried him, on lonely Mars.

The weeks after were a horror. But they passed. One day, Mason went to Sanders' grave to murmur a prayer. Then he returned to the ship. He stood with one foot on the first run of the ascent ladder, turned for one final look at Mars. He shook his fist at it. At its bleakness, at its lack of life. There was nothing on Mars. Nothing but hatred and cold and barrenness. He climbed into the ship, actuated the controls, rose on a pillar of flame . . .

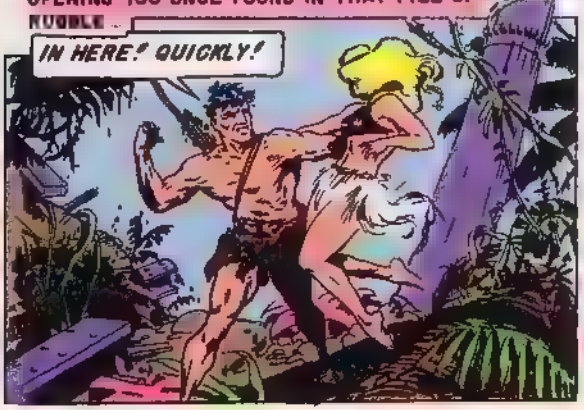
. . . never knew that just before he set foot on the ladder his heel crushed an entire city; never knew that the gravel his foot crunched was composed of microscopic soaring towers and tiny, delicate homes, and tinier men. Mars had not been empty. But it was—now.

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

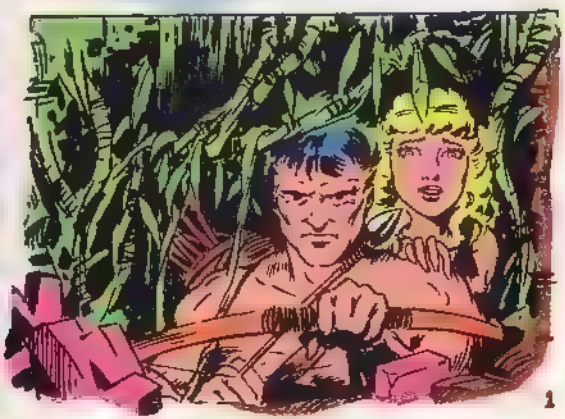
YOU RUN. . WILDLY...DESPERATELY...YOU AND YOUR MATE. YOU RACE ALONG THROUGH THE FOREST ON WINGS OF BLIND TERROR. THE PINES, MISSHAPEN BY A THOUSAND YEARS OF INSANE EVOLUTION, TEAR AT YOUR FLESH. AND THEN YOU SEE IT.. AHEAD... YOUR SANCTUARY. THERE, IN THE OVERGROWN RUINS, MEN CAN HIDE. *MEN!* EVEN AS YOU RUN, THE WORD SINGS IN YOUR HEAD. YES, THERE ARE TRUE MEN IN THE WORLD STILL. MEN LIKE YOU. AND THE HORRORS, LIKE THOSE THAT BAY AT YOUR HEELS NOW, HAVE NOT YET INHERITED THE EARTH...



SO MANY TIMES BEFORE, YOU STOOD AMONG THESE OVERGROWN RUINS AND WONDERED: WHAT HAD IT BEEN LIKE, THIS CITY, BEFORE THE KILLING FIRES? BUT NOW, THERE IS NO TIME FOR WONDERING. YOU MUST FIND REFUGE. THE TINY OPENING YOU ONCE FOUND IN THAT PILE OF RUBBLE...

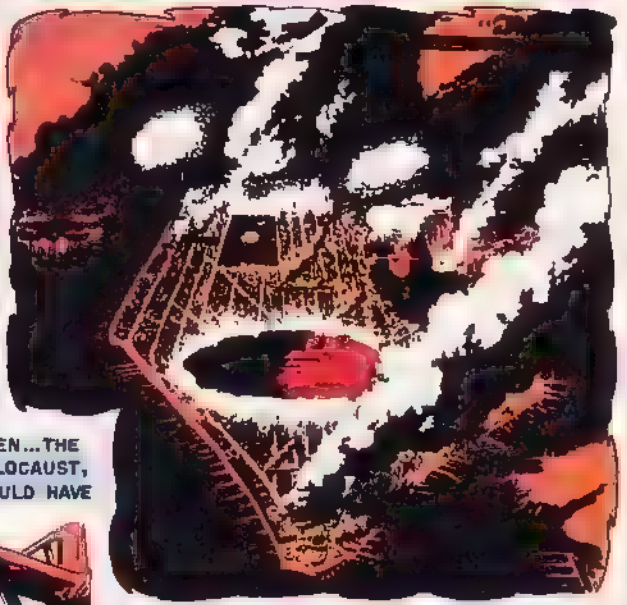


YOU AND YOUR MATE DUCK INTO THE CAVE-LIKE SPACE IN THE HUGE PILE OF TUMBLED STONES. YOU STARE OUT THROUGH THE VINES DANGLING OVER THE OPENING... YOUR BOWS AND ARROWS READY...



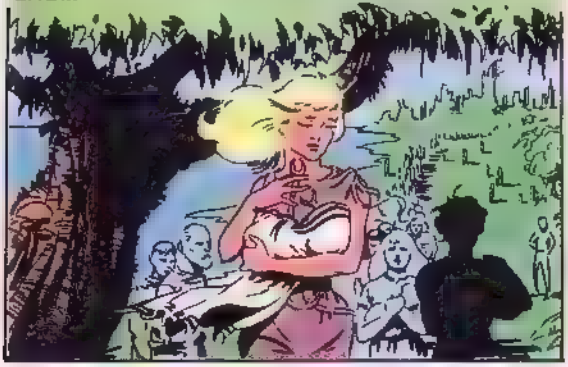
THE LIZARD THINGS RACE PAST, BUT YOU AND YOUR MATE DO NOT DARE MOVE. YOU WAIT... AND THE HOURS ARE LONG. AND AS YOU WAIT, YOU DREAM, AND AFTER A WHILE, IT SEEMS TO YOU THAT THE DEAD CITY OUTSIDE YOUR SANCTUARY BEGINS TO STIR...

THE TRIBAL LEGENDS DRIFT THROUGH YOUR MIND... HOW ONCE THE CITY TOWERED TO THE CLOWDS... HOW MEN HAD BUILT AND MADE GREAT AND WONDERFUL THINGS...HOW, IN THE END, THEY HAD BECOME VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN TERRIBLE WEAPONS.

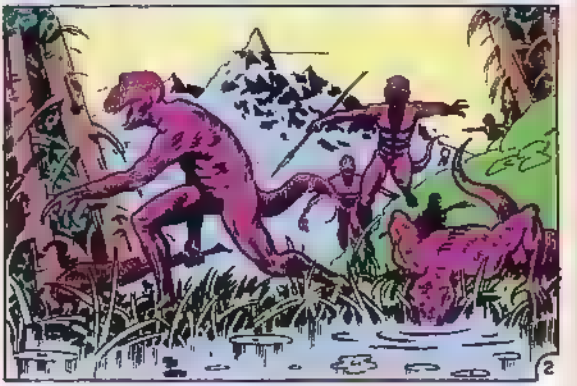


FIRST, THERE HAD BEEN THE KILLING FIRES. AND THEN...THE GREATER HORROR... THE NEWLY BORN. AFTER THE HOLOCAUST, THE CHILDREN OF MEN HAD NOT BEEN AS THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN. THEY WERE...DIFFERENT...

MAN HAD TRIED TO SAVE HIMSELF. THE FIRST MUTATIONS HAD BEEN DESTROYED. BUT THERE HAD BEEN TOO MANY WHO HAD LOVED THEIR YOUNG NOT WISELY BUT TOO WELL. THERE HAD BEEN THOSE WHO HAD FLED THE RUINED CITIES THAT THEIR MONSTER-CHILDREN MIGHT LIVE...



AND SO, THE EARTH HAD BECOME PEOPLED BY SCATTERED BANDS OF MONSTROSITIES. MAN HAD INSTINCTIVELY REMAINED NEAR THE CITIES, BUT THE OTHERS HAD BECOME NOMADS...LIKE THE LIZARD-CREATURES WHO HAD STUMBLED ON YOUR WATER-HOLE THAT MORNING...



THEY'D SPRUNG FROM THEIR HIDING PLACE, SCREAMING THEIR BLOOD-LUST CRIES AND BRANDISHING THEIR WEAPONS...

LITA! BEHIND YOU! LOOK OUT!

YOU'D HAD TIME FOR ONLY ONE ARROW, WHICH FOUND ITS MARK. THEN YOU'D TURNED AND...

RUN, LITA!

SO YOU AND YOUR MATE HAD RACED IN BLIND TERROR.. THEIR SHRIEKS OF "FREAKS" DINNING IN YOUR EARS. THEY'D CALLED *YOU* "FREAK"! ONE DAY THEY WOULD *LEARN* WHO WERE THE *TRUE MEN*...TO THEIR SORROW! BUT NOW, YOUR DREAM DIES. THE CITY IS DEAD RUINS, LYING WHITE AND STILL IN THE NIGHT...

COME, LITA! WE MUST RETURN TO THE *TRIBE!* WE MUST WARN THE *OTHERS* OF THESE CREATURES WHO HAVE WANDERED INTO OUR FOREST!

YOU WALK WEARILY, AWARE OF EVERY SIGHT AND SOUND BEFORE YOU AND BEHIND YOU. MOST TIMES, YOU HAVE LEARNED, DEATH STRIKES FROM BEHIND, SO IT IS THE BACKTRAIL YOU SCAN MOST ANXIOUSLY. AT LAST, YOU REACH THE TRIBAL CAMP SAFELY, ONLY TO FIND...

GASP.

THE *LIZARD-THINGS!* THEY WERE *HERE!*

YOUR MATE COMES INTO YOUR ARMS, TREMBLING...

THEY..THEY WILL HUNT *US* DOWN *ALSO*, JO-SEP! I... I AM *AFRAID!*

I...I *KNOW!* WE WILL HAVE TO *LEAVE* THE FOREST! THE TALES TELL OF *OTHER* TRIBES OF *TRUE MEN*...TO THE *WEST!* WITH *THEM*, WE WOULD BE *SAFE!*

LEAVE!? GO...*WEST!?* BUT WE HAVE *NEVER* LEFT THE FOREST. WHO KNOWS WHAT WE WILL *FIND?*

WE HAVE NO *CHOICE!* TWO OF US WOULD HAVE *NO CHANCE* AGAINST THE LIZARDS. IF THERE ARE *MEN* TO THE WEST, THEY MIGHT *HELP US!*

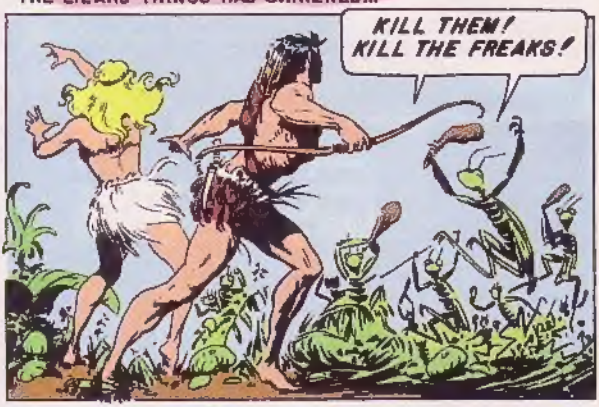
YOU STAND IN YOUR SILENT FOREST THAT SURROUNDS YOUR DEAD TRIBAL CAMP AND YOU VOW...

WE WILL *COME BACK!* ONE DAY WE WILL *SHOW* THE VERMIN THAT CRAWL THE EARTH WHO ARE THE *MEN* AND WHO ARE THE *FREAKS!*

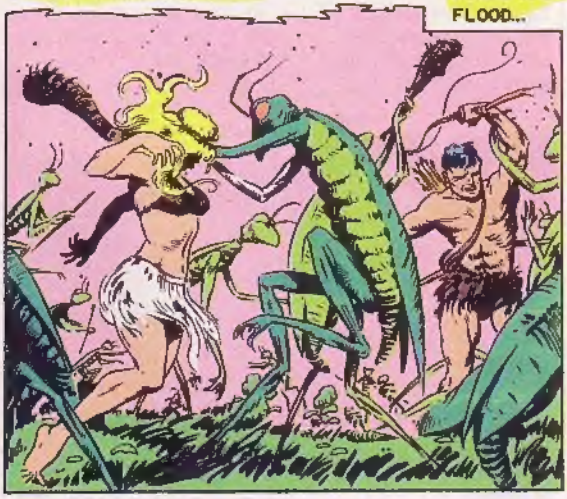
...AND YOU SHAKE YOUR FIST AT THE DARKNESS. AND YOU THINK BLACK THOUGHTS OF VENGEANCE. THEN YOU TAKE TO THE TRAIL...FOR TO LINGER IS DEATH...EVEN FOR A TRUE MAN...

BY MORNING, YOU ARE FAR OUT ON THE FLAT PLAIN. YOUR MUSCLES ACHE WITH FATIGUE BUT YOU DARE NOT REST YOU GO ON AND SUDDENLY, YOU CATCH A FLASH OF MOVEMENT BEHIND YOU...

THE THINGS COME ON MONSTROUS LEAPS...LONG-LEGGED THINGS WITH BODIES LIKE REEDS. THEY COME LIKE GIANT INSECTS AND THEIR WORDS ARE THE SAME WORDS THAT THE LIZARD-THINGS HAD SHRIEKED...

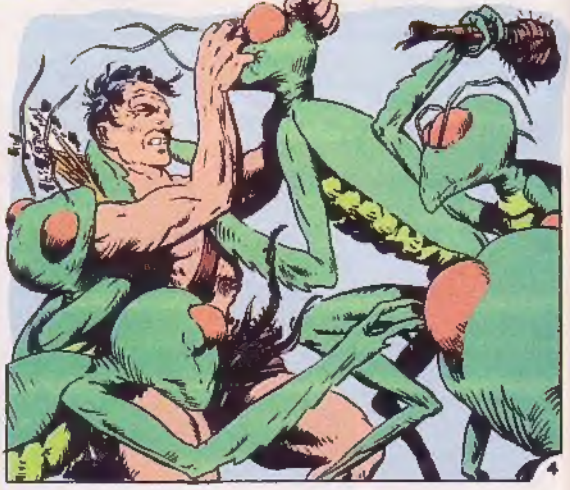


THEY ARE UPON YOU SUDDENLY AND YOUR ARROW MISSES ITS MARK. YOU SEE LITA STRUCK DOWN SAVAGELY...

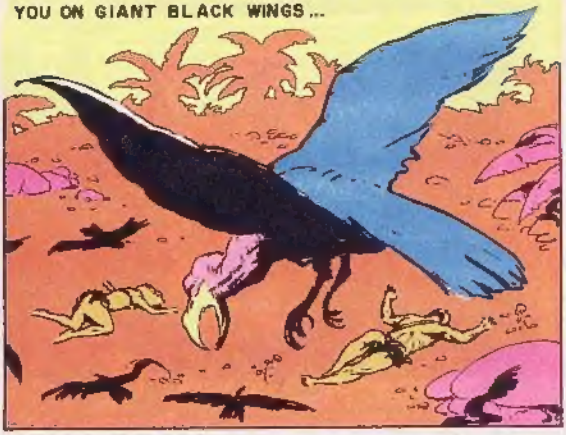


IN THAT MOMENT, YOUR HEART BREAKS. LITA FALLS AND YOU KNOW THAT YOUR MATE IS DEAD. THE RAGE FLOWS OVER YOU IN A RED FLOOD...

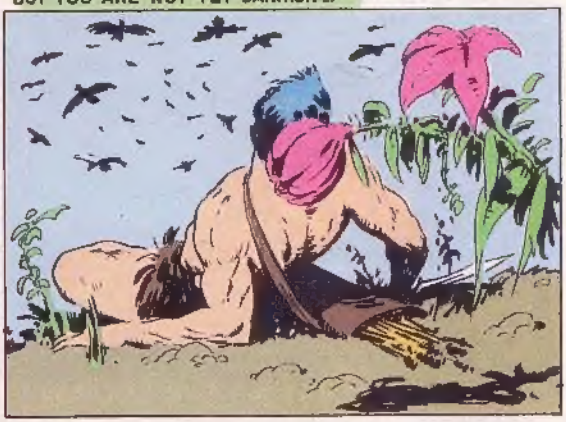
BUT THE STRUGGLE IS HOPELESS. A CLUB RIPS INTO YOUR SCALP



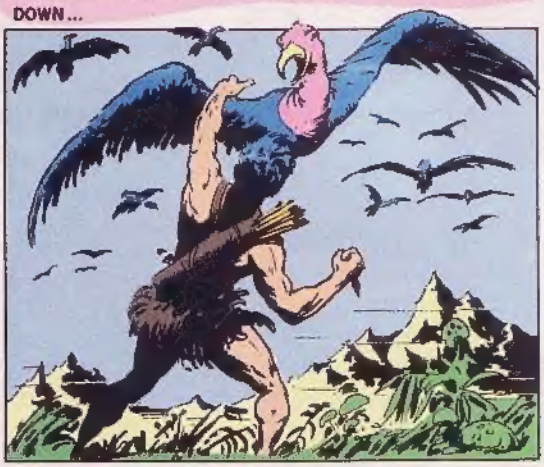
THEN THERE IS ONLY BLACKNESS. YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THE INSECT THINGS LEAVE YOU FOR DEAD. YOU DO NOT SEE THE CARRION-EATERS HOVERING ABOVE YOU ON GIANT BLACK WINGS...



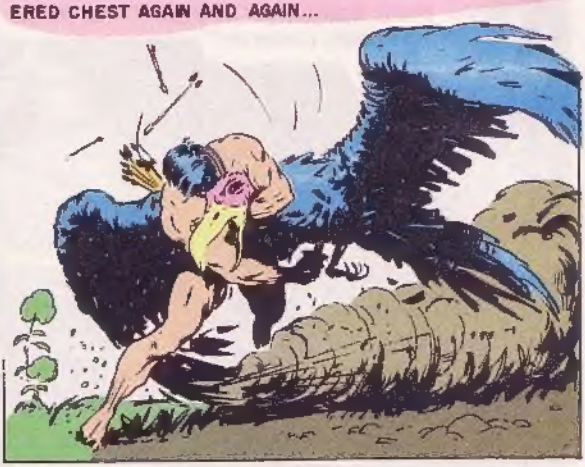
YOU KNOW NOTHING. FIRST THERE IS A BLACKNESS AND THEN THERE IS THE THROBBING, AGONIZING PAIN. AND THEN YOU ARE AWARE OF THE CREATURES ABOVE YOU. BUT YOU ARE NOT YET CARRION...



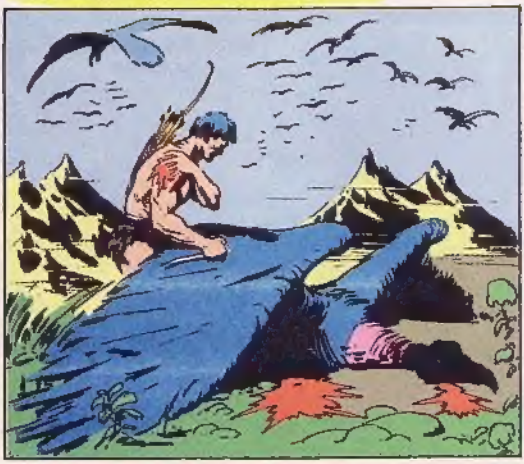
YOU RAISE YOURSELF WEAKLY...REACHING FOR YOUR KNIFE ...AS ONE OF THE HIDEOUS MONSTERS SWOOPS DOWN...



YOU STRUGGLE WITH IT, FEELING ITS TALONS RIPPING INTO YOUR FLESH, DRIVING YOUR KNIFE INTO ITS FEATHERED CHEST AGAIN AND AGAIN...



SOON, IT LIES DEAD AT YOUR FEET. THE OTHERS ABOVE WING OFF, SCREAMING...

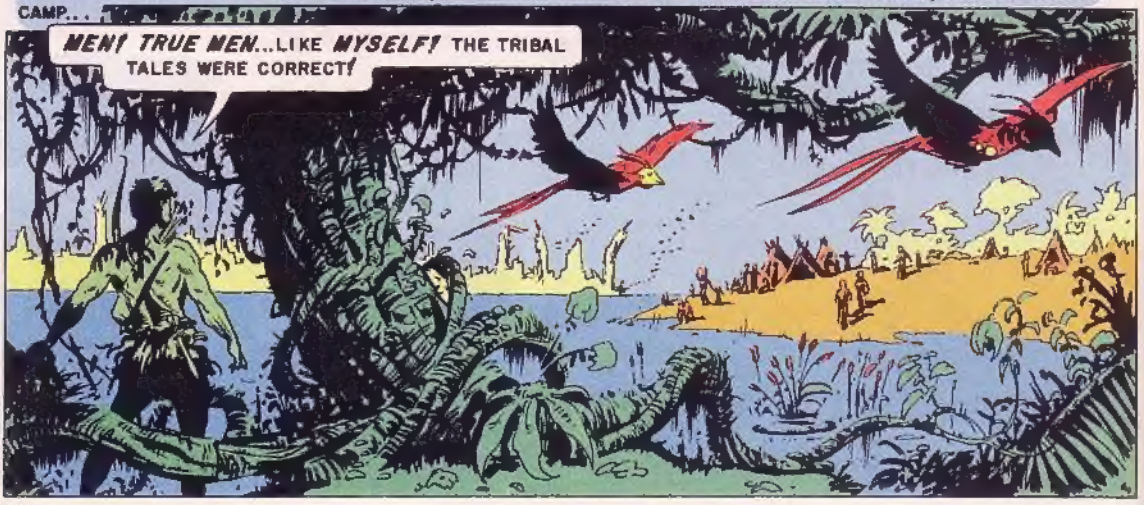


THE CARRION-EATER BECOMES CARRION. THE BIRD IS FOOD AND YOU FIND WATER NEARBY. FOR DAYS YOU LIVE IN A SHADOW WORLD, NURSING YOUR WOUNDS. YOU DREAM VAGUELY OF VENGEANCE UNTIL AT LAST YOUR STRENGTH RETURNS AND YOU TAKE TO THE TRAIL ONCE MORE...

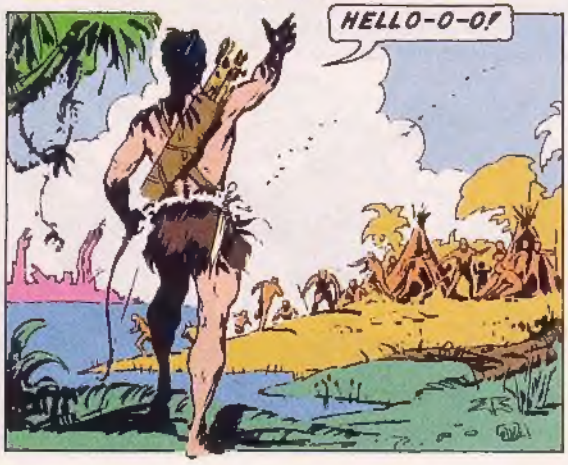
YOU COVER LITA'S BODY WITH STONES AND YOU MOVE ON... TOWARD THE WEST. AND YOU STILL DREAM YOUR DREAMS OF HOW IT WILL BE WHEN MEN ONCE MORE RULE THE EARTH... EVEN THOUGH, FOR NOW, THE DREAM MUST REMAIN A DREAM...

A DOZEN TIMES YOUR SENSES SAVE YOU. A DOZEN TIMES, YOU SKULK... YOU HIDE... UNTIL AT LAST YOU SEE THE BROKEN OUTLINE OF ANOTHER RUINED CITY ON THE HORIZON. YOU RUN WILDLY TOWARD IT...

YOU COME TO THE BANKS OF A MIGHTY RIVER. THE RUINED CITY LIES BEYOND. YOU MOVE ALONG ITS SHORES, SEARCHING FOR A WAY TO CROSS. AND THEN, AS YOU BREAK THROUGH A SMALL GROVE OF TREES, YOU SEE IT... THE CAMP...



YOU START TOWARD THEM, WAVING YOUR ARMS JOYFULLY. THEY TURN TOWARD YOU, STARTLED...



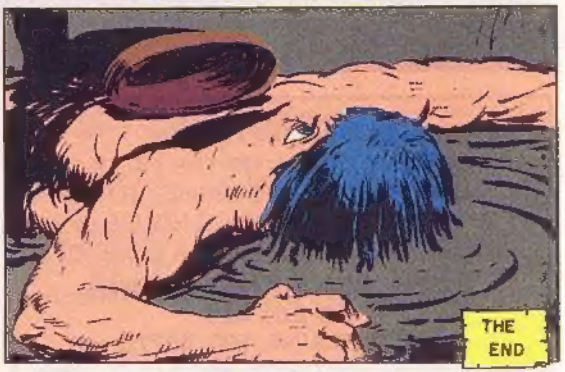
AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE MEN ARE SCRAMBLING FOR THEIR WEAPONS... THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN DIVING INTO THE RIVER...

THE YOUNG... THE AGED... THE WOMEN FLEE TO THE RIVER. THE MEN SNATCH UP THEIR WEAPONS AND START TOWARD YOU. YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND. YOU RAISE YOUR EMPTY HANDS... STOP... STAND STILL... AND WAIT...

NOW THEY ARE RUNNING AT YOU... COMING CLOSER... CLOSE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO SEE...

MEN!? SUDDENLY YOU KNOW WHY THE RIVER IS THEIR REFUGE. THEY ARE CLOSE ENOUGH FOR YOU TO SEE THEIR GILLS NOW... THEIR FLAT FACES WITHOUT NOSTRILS... THEIR TELESCOPE EYES... THEIR WEBBED FINGERS. AND IT IS TOO LATE...

YOUR KNIFE FALLS FROM YOUR NERVELESS FINGERS AS A RIVER BED STONE FROM A SEAWEED SLING DROPS YOU LIKE A FELLED TREE. YOU PITCH FORWARD, DAZEDLY...

BUT YOU DO NOT LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS. IT IS AS IF EVERY MUSCLE IN YOUR BODY IS PARALYZED. YOU LIE THERE, FACE DOWN, AND THE FISH-CREATURES STAND OVER YOU... SPEARS RAISED...

YOU WATCH... FASCINATED... WAITING FOR DEATH. AND SOMEHOW, EVEN THEN, THE PRIDE PERSISTS IN YOU. AT LEAST YOU DIE A *MAN!* YOU'RE NOT A *FREAK*... LIKE *THEM!* YOU LIE THERE, FACE DOWN IN THE RIVER BANK MUD, AND YOU *WATCH* AS THE SPEAR COMES DOWN... AND YOU DON'T EVEN *BLINK* YOUR THIRD EYE...